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## PETER AND THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

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Peter<sup>1</sup> was the foremost of Jesus' immediate followers. He was one of the first to be called to discipleship.<sup>2</sup> He appears in the gospels as the most earnest, loyal, out-spoken, active, and helpful apostle. They always name him first in any group where he is present;<sup>3</sup> he heads the roll of the apostles in all four places where the list is given;<sup>4</sup> he is the spokesman or hero of various occasions;<sup>5</sup> even his momentary lapse at the hearing of Jesus before Caiaphas is told at length in all the gospels;<sup>6</sup> and by the Gospel of Matthew, in the famous passage 16:17-19, he is given a special blessing, honor, position, and authority.

The prominence he gained during the public ministry he maintained during the years that followed, as the Book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul show. He was leader of the group of Christians at Jerusalem in the days after Jesus' crucifixion; he was spokesman to the hearers on the Day of Pentecost; he was preacher to the people

<sup>1</sup> His original Aramaic name was Simeon (Acts 15:14). By this name (Graecized into Simon) he appears in the gospel narratives, e.g., Mark 1:16, 29 f., 36, *et al.* The name Peter is a transliteration of the Greek *Petros*, which is the Greek word corresponding to the Aramaic Cephas (=rock), and both these Greek and Aramaic synonyms are used in the New Testament (Peter in Mark 3:16; 5:37; 8:33; 9:2; Gal. 2:7 f; *et al.*; Cephas in John 1:42; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14; 1 Cor. 9:5, *et al.*). The name Cephas (=Peter) was given by Jesus to Simeon (=Simon) as an additional characterizing name, when he had shown rocklike stability and efficiency as a disciple (Mark 3:16; Matt. 16:17 f.; John 1:42). The gospels therefore speak of him more often as Peter, and the Book of Acts (except at 15:14) uses only this given name. The Gospel of John, in referring to him, generally combines the two names, designating him as Simon Peter (John 6:8, 68; 13:6, 9, 24, 36; 18:10, 15, 25; 20:2, 6; 21:3, 7, 15).

<sup>2</sup> Along with Andrew his brother, and with James and John, who may have been relatives of theirs (Mark 1:16-20).

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:16, 29, 36; 5:36; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33, *et al.*

<sup>4</sup> Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 9:5; 8:33; 10:28; Matt. 14:28-31; 15:15; 16:16-19; 17:24-27; 18:21; 26:33-35; John 13:6-10; 18:10; 21:15-23.

<sup>6</sup> Mark 14:53-72, and the parallel passages.

in the court of the temple; under arrest he was champion of Christianity before the Sanhedrin; he was foremost in the condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it was he who led in the inspection of Philip's evangelizing work in Samaria; it was he who traveled around Palestine strengthening the groups of Christians in many places; it was he who at Caesarea welcomed to Christianity the gentile Cornelius and his friends, later maintaining at Jerusalem the right and wisdom of this action; it was he whom Agrippa I would have put to death, because of his prominence and activity as a leader of the Christians.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in Paul's Galatian letter we see Peter as the head of the Christian movement in Palestine, superior to James, the local head of the Jerusalem church, in that he was "intrusted with the gospel of the circumcision"; later, because of his leadership and influence, receiving Paul's condemnation for withholding a full fraternity with gentile Christians; while in I Corinthians his name is used as a party watchword, evidently on the ground that he was the foremost of the original apostles and the chief representative of the Jewish branch of Christianity; and Paul refers to his missionary work on behalf of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

The New Testament therefore makes Peter the most prominent, active, wise, and efficient of the original group of apostles chosen, taught, and trained by Jesus. Paul also is set forth as prominent, active, wise, and efficient, but in another field—he does not divide or dispute with Peter the headship of Palestinian Christianity. They are twin leaders, as it were, of the two great branches of Christianity in the generation following the public ministry of Jesus. It does not seem likely that such deductions from, and modifications of, this canonical picture as historical investigation of the facts may necessitate, will essentially alter this standing and relation of Peter and Paul.

And we need not be surprised that the Christian church, in the centuries which succeeded Peter and Paul, looked back to Peter more than to Paul as the pre-eminent apostle, the one who stood next to

<sup>7</sup> Acts, chaps. 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Acts, chaps. 8-12. A historical criticism of the narrative in Acts 10:1-11:18 is not here to be entered upon.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 2:7-9, 11-14; I Cor. 1:12; 9:5.

Jesus in the founding of Christianity. It was true that the great majority of the Christians were gentiles rather than Jews, converts of Paul rather than of Peter. It was true also that the dominant type of Christianity was universalistic rather than particularistic. As regards influence and achievement, Paul measured larger than Peter. As for turning the gospel of Jesus into a world-wide religion, that was Paul's especial service. And the Epistles of Paul, which constitute one-third of the New Testament in bulk, and certainly not less than that amount in value, give us acquaintance with Paul and Paul's message in a remarkably full and accurate way, while we have little or nothing at first hand from Peter. Besides, we are gentiles, and for this reason we are more interested in and appreciative of Paul the apostle of the gentile gospel than we are of Peter the apostle of the Jewish gospel. This is not to say that Paul and Peter were equally great; the judgment of history pronounces Paul the greater of the two, in spiritual insight, in moral courage, in practical wisdom, in Christian theology, in missionary labors, in service to humanity. Yet comparison of "greatness" is difficult, and our information concerning the two men is unequal. It may come about that Peter will be more highly estimated as the history of the period becomes clearer.<sup>10</sup>

Certainly the church tradition of the early centuries, and Roman Catholic ecclesiastical dogma, have put Peter forward. They made him the founder of the church at Rome, the primate of the apostles, the chief authority in the whole Christian movement, the possessor, guardian, and transmitter of Christian truth, the first pope and the one from whom all succeeding heads of the church have derived their position and their power.

But these claims for, and ascriptions to, Peter are not supported either by the New Testament (unless in the passage under consideration), or by much additional evidence from the first and second centuries. The gospels make Peter the foremost of the apostles, as we have seen.

<sup>10</sup> Peter's reputation has suffered much at the hands of the homilists, who refer to him chiefly as a despicable example of impetuosity, over-confidence, fickleness, and denial of Christ. Harnack, *Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts in den zwei ersten Jahrhunderten* (1910), S. 6, says: "Protestant exegetes and historians are inclined to underestimate the position of Peter among the Twelve and in the early church."

but they do not assign him any official position or authority above James, John, and the rest. He is "first among equals"—that is, he has a common appointment and service with the other apostles, in which he shows himself superior to them in certain grand qualities of character and efficiency. Perhaps his forwardness was also in part due to superior years, maturity, and experience. The Book of Acts, testifying also to Peter's prominence, makes impossible the view that he had primacy over the other apostles; he is leader, even of the "Twelve," but without distinction of office or authority. In the Galatian Epistle of Paul the same view of Peter is presented; he exerts his influence by conference and example, not by official pronouncement or by the assumption of the right to dictate in the affairs of the Christian movement; he even yields to Paul's argument in behalf of the gentile principle, and concedes to him the gentile field.

As for Peter's connection with the church at Rome, the evidence of the New Testament is negative, but inconclusive.<sup>11</sup> It seems reasonable to hold, from the silence of the Acts and the Pauline epistles, that Peter was not at Rome at any time within the period of history which they cover, namely, as far down as the spring of 63 A.D. He could not then have been the founder of the Christian church at Rome; nor would Paul's relation to that church, which was gentile and Pauline-Christian, admit of the traditional hypothesis that Peter had founded and ministered to this church for twenty-five years before his death. Tradition assigns the death of Peter to the year 68 A.D., but also connects it with the Neronian persecution. This first imperial outbreak against the Christians fell in 64 A.D., and apparently was spasmodic rather than continued. Probably therefore the death of Peter took place in that year rather than as late as the year 68. The death of Paul may also be regarded as one of the violent acts of the same persecution, taking place in the same year, and both of them at Rome. In that case Peter may have been at Rome for a year before his martyr death there, but not until Paul's connection with the church had been established by his two years' residence in Rome, and the

<sup>11</sup>The term "Babylon" in I Pet. 5:12 quite surely refers to the city of Rome, and may indicate that this epistle was written at Rome. But much doubt exists as to the authorship of the letter.

evangelizing activity which was permitted him under mild bonds. Peter could not then have been very much to the Roman church by reason of a personal ministry to it.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, one wonders whether the common opinion of scholars in favor of Peter's ministry at Rome will stand. It is vigorously and forcibly controverted.<sup>13</sup> The advocates of this view have not yet furnished a satisfactory explanation of how Peter came to go to Rome.<sup>14</sup> One would not, from the New Testament indications, expect him to do so. His field was Palestine, his work among Jews;<sup>15</sup> Rome and the gentile Christians of that city belonged to Paul's field.<sup>16</sup> Peter had yielded to facts and arguments in behalf of the admission of gentiles to Christianity without obedience to the Jewish ritual law; but he was not of a mind to preach such a gospel himself, or to carry on a mission with or among those who insisted upon such a disregard of the Jewish law. It seems highly improbable, therefore, that Peter should have undertaken work in connection with the Roman church.<sup>17</sup> The same impulse that led later Christians to assume Peter's planting and headship of the church at Rome may have created the assumption that he went to Rome; obviously he would have to

<sup>12</sup> So great is the difficulty with the tradition at this point that McGiffert, *American Journal of Theology*, I, 145-57, argues for the death of Paul in 58 A.D., in order that Peter may have *six years* for his ministry to the church at Rome, holding that he could not have had such relationship to the church until after Paul was removed. But there are many difficulties with moving back Paul's death to so early a date, and Peter's presence in Rome is not so sure a datum as to require the readjustment of dates for the life of Paul in accordance with it.

<sup>13</sup> See especially Schmiedel, art. "Simon Peter," in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*.

<sup>14</sup> Chase, Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Peter," thinks Paul invited Peter to come to Rome and carry on work there. The explanation seems to be gratuitous and improbable; Paul shows no such inclination to secure Peter's co-operation in his own churches, and never indicates that Peter adopted his principle of entire fraternity between Jewish Christians and gentile Christians in the churches (Gal. 2:11-14). If he did not, Peter was not qualified to act as head of a gentile-Christian church, at Rome or elsewhere. Assuming the traditional view that Peter wrote the canonical First Epistle of Peter, we would have proof that Peter became thoroughly Paulinized in point of view, spirit, and doctrine, that he at least wrote a letter to churches in the Pauline field, and perhaps that he visited Rome. But the Petrine authorship of First Peter is beset with difficulties.

<sup>15</sup> Gal. 2:7-9.

<sup>16</sup> Rom. 1:13; 15:20-29.

<sup>17</sup> McGiffert, *op. cit.*, thinks we cannot doubt Peter's ministry to the church at Rome because the tradition to this effect is so strong.

be there if he was to found the church and minister to it for the last twenty-five years of his life.<sup>18</sup>

This impulse to elevate Peter was ecclesiastical. The organization of the Christian movement developed slowly. Jesus did not dictate, or even suggest, to his followers any formal organization. Even the apostles, when the number of Christians was increasing and groups were arising in many localities, seem not to have pursued a systematic formal method in organizing the groups. The first Christians, being Jews, cared for no elaborate or rigid form of organization; and they naturally adopted for their churches, with more or less modification, some of the features of administration which were in vogue in the Jewish synagogues. The synagogue employed a very simple, democratic, practical form of organization, providing only for the necessary supervision and care of the community affairs. The early Christian churches in Palestine needed little in the way of formal officers; and we are not sure how soon they established the office of "elder," which was perhaps their first step toward organization.<sup>19</sup> The presence of the apostles, and of the brothers of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> supplied them for a time with general leaders; and these were accepted as such without formal election to any set office.

The gentile churches were less well provided with informal leaders, Paul being the only one that in this respect quite paralleled the original apostles in Palestine. Yet none of Paul's epistles until Philippians in 62 or 63 A.D. makes specific mention of formal officers.<sup>21</sup> It is surprising, from our point of view, that the churches could get along

<sup>18</sup> The customary way of putting this matter is, that the later Christians would not have alleged that Peter founded and ministered to the Roman church if he had not actually been at Rome and had not actually rendered some important service to the church. But church traditions did not always rest upon historical facts; they sometimes rested upon presuppositions of an ecclesiastical, doctrinal, or apologetic nature.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22 refer to "elders" at Jerusalem. It is possible that this term refers to the elder members of the church (as could be read in 15:22) rather than to formal officers; or that by an anachronism the formal office of elder was assumed for this earliest period of the church. The Book of Acts makes no mention of "deacons" in the churches, but 6:1-6 shows that the Jerusalem church at one time appointed seven men to look after the care of the needy members. See esp. Harnack, *op. cit.*, S. 12-28.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 1:14; 15:3 (this James being the brother of Jesus, as in Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12).

<sup>21</sup> Phil. 1:1 speaks of "bishops and deacons," from which it is generally understood that these two formal offices existed in the church at Philippi just before the death

even for a time without such. Not many decades passed until an organization was developed. These gentile churches, outside of Palestine, did not copy their organization from the Palestinian churches but may have been influenced by them, and also by the type of synagogue organization which was to be found in almost every gentile city where Christian churches were founded. Further, the Christian organization was influenced by the methods customary in the civic and religious organizations of the Graeco-Roman world. Perhaps at the start this Graeco-Roman influence was secondary; but in time it was certain to become primary. Churches made up of gentiles would come to follow gentile models in their type of institution and administration.

The type of political organization then dominant and absorbing was monarchical. The Roman republic had given way to the Roman empire, the democracy of the Roman government was succumbing to the imperial spirit and control, the law tended to adopt the military type of administration which had proved so effective in building up the power of Rome. The Christian church, even though it had wished to do so, could not have resisted the dominant trend in organization. Nor is there evidence that the church desired or attempted resistance. Rather, it was swept along by the current tide to the gradual assumption of a monarchical type of organization. Early in the second century we see unmistakable evidences that the church is to develop into an elaborate, rigidly fashioned institution.<sup>22</sup> The ecclesiastical consciousness and impulse became manifest. The memorabilia of Jesus' ministry were interpreted to meet this new need and aim. That Jesus should have foreseen and arranged for such an organization of his followers seemed to them likely. That he appointed and empowered someone to be the head and administrator of this church seemed to them probable, or at least desirable. Who should this be but Peter, his chief apostle?

of Paul. This interpretation has been questioned by some; see Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*. The lists of the spiritual gifts in I Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30 contain reference to the various kinds of helpful activities in his churches, but do not seem to name any formal offices—the nearest to this are the “helps and governments.”

<sup>22</sup> See the Epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius, the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.



And what church should be the head and front of this great ecclesiastical organization but the church at Rome? For Rome was the capital of the empire, and the chief church of Christendom must be in the chief city.

Jerusalem could not serve as the center of Christianity for seven distinct reasons: (1) it was not geographically central for the Mediterranean world; (2) it was intensely Jewish, and was therefore despised by the gentiles; (3) gentiles who became Christians would hardly think better of Jerusalem, for its leading men had crucified Christ;<sup>23</sup> (4) the church at Jerusalem was the "mother church" for Jewish Christianity, but not for gentile Christianity; so far as there was a "mother church" of gentile Christianity, it was the church at Antioch; but that was only at the beginning of Paul's ministry—the churches of Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Italy never had any relations of dependence, affiliation, or special reverence for the church at Antioch; all Paul's churches were independent churches—he did not co-ordinate them, or teach them to look upon any one church as superior or authoritative over the others; (5) Paul claimed and dominated the gentile field—neither the original apostles nor the Jerusalem church were allowed to occupy this territory; the efforts made in Paul's churches by the Judaizing Christian teachers, whose strength lay chiefly in their Judean support, were defeated by Paul's vigorous resistance; (6) Paul considered, doubtless rightly, that the church at Rome belonged to his field, and that it would logically be the most important church of the Mediterranean world because of its location at the capital of the empire; therefore he had "oftentimes purposed to go thither," but felt that he must evangelize the provinces as they came, between Palestine and Italy;<sup>24</sup> (7) neither the Jerusalem church nor the original apostles interpreted Christianity in a way that qualified it for success among all the peoples of the empire; such success required that Christianity be spiritual and universalistic in its scope,

<sup>23</sup> I Thess. 2:14-16, "For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus; for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the gentiles that they may be saved."

<sup>24</sup> "So that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ," Rom. 15:19.

doctrine, and method; even Peter could not have given the right point of view and direction to the Christian church at Rome.

But if the church at Rome belonged to Paul's field, and was Pauline in tone, and received Paul's supervision and ministry during two of the latest years of his life, how did it happen in tradition that Peter, not Paul, came to be regarded as the founder and head of this church?

The facts may have been something like this: (1) Paul's personal connection with the church at Rome came late; this church had been going on for years before he came to it, had developed strong local leaders, and had acquired numbers and momentum; it was thus in a position of independence toward any apostolic leader—Paul or other—and sufficient unto itself for the carrying forward of its work as the church at the imperial capital; (2) Paul did not obtain or even assume the same kind of headship over the Roman church that he held over the churches in the eastern provinces—partly for the reason just indicated, but partly also because his limitations as a prisoner during the two years of his residence at Rome made it impossible for him to exert a full personal influence and do a full work in the church there; (3) Paul did not construct a formal organization of his churches, but depended upon a spirit of brotherhood to hold them together; even in the local church he perhaps did not establish formal officers to give strength and effectiveness to the group; but experience showed the Christians that a more formal, comprehensive, and vigorous organization of the Christian movement was necessary to self-preservation against the governmental persecution that grew deliberate, continuous, and systematic in the reigns of Domitian and Trajan, at the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries A.D.; naturally the type of organization adopted and put into effect for the Christian church would correspond to the political organization of the empire—the monarchical type; (4) in the second century, when the Christian church came to single out from the past some one great personage to be regarded as the prototype of its church leaders, the founder of its primary church, the representative of Christ on earth, the collective Christian judgment passed by Paul and settled upon Peter; this was partly because Paul was regarded as not sufficiently conservative—he was radical, innovating, aggressive, individual; they felt they needed as an ideal and model for the whole church an apostle of a

more moderate and conservative type; and it was partly because Paul in a historical sense was not sufficiently close to Jesus, the founder of Christianity; he was not one of the original apostles, which meant that he had not been as obviously selected and appointed to his apostleship<sup>25</sup> as was the case with Peter; further, he had not accompanied Jesus in his ministry and learned his gospel directly from Jesus, as Peter had done; and lastly, among the Judean Christians some of them denounced, others held aloof from Paul, and he carried on a polemic against them—all of which created the general feeling that Paul was not as original, representative, safe, and desirable a personage as Peter for elevation to the headship of the church on earth.

Thus, perhaps, it came about that Peter was given a superior place to Paul in the later esteem of the Christian church, and in the rise and growth of ecclesiastical organization was assigned to the supreme position in the church by making him founder and for twenty-five years head of the church at Rome. This elevation of Peter by Christian tradition was not primarily due to the presence and activity of Peter at Rome in the year or years just preceding his martyrdom; he may or may not have been there—it seems likely that the tradition associating him with the Roman church would have arisen independently of his actual presence there. Primarily the tradition was due to the need felt for connecting the ecclesiastical organization as directly, closely, and strongly as possible with Jesus himself, and so with the supreme author and authority of Christianity. Jesus' chief apostle—Peter, selected, appointed, taught, trained, and authorized immediately by Jesus, seemed quite the most satisfactory figure for the "first Pope." Later it came to be assumed that the plans of and in-

<sup>25</sup> Paul stoutly claimed to be an apostle with the full function and authority appertaining thereto. Gal. 1:1 presents his solemn affirmation of this claim. Gal., chaps. 1, 2, argue this claim. I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Eph. 1:1 reiterate the claim. I Cor. 9:1f. asserts his apostleship against the specific denial of it by his Corinthian opponents: "Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are ye not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." It is clear that Paul felt surer of his apostleship than anyone else, for even his own converts were influenced by the arguments of Paul's adversaries against his claim to be an apostle. One whose apostleship was strenuously disputed, even Paul, was put at a great disadvantage when it came to choosing an original head for the church at Rome and for the entire Christian church.

junction for this great monarchical institution of the church originated with Jesus, in a definite provision by him for the organization of his followers; and that he formally appointed Peter, his chief apostle, to communicate it and put it into effect for the whole church. The ecclesiastical instincts, impulses, and ideas which gave rise to the Peter tradition, with considerable disregard of the historical facts about him, and with some reduction of the honor due the apostle Paul, are akin to the ecclesiastical instincts, impulses, and ideas which have operated in the Christian church through the centuries until the present time, and are now operative.

The canonical gospels contain but scanty allusions to the rise of the ecclesiastical spirit among the Christians and the growth of formal church organization. For one thing, the gospels arose too early to reflect much of this new development in the Christian movement. Even if the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John be assigned to a period as late as the beginning of the second century, this would enable them to show no more than the trend and first aspects of ecclesiasticism. The type of Christian organization with which we are familiar in the Roman Catholic church was centuries in maturing—the first and second centuries produced only the elementary stages of it. For another thing, the Synoptic Gospels<sup>26</sup> present not chronicles of events but memorabilia of the public ministry of Jesus from a time forty to eighty years after. These memorabilia were collected and published with a homiletical and evangelizing rather than a historical purpose; they were selected, arranged, and more or less adapted to promote the gospel in the period when they were written; they took on some of the color, some of the interpretation, some of the point of view, some of the special ideas that belonged to the later time. Nevertheless, these gospels reflect in the main faithfully and trustworthily Jesus' words, ideas, and deeds in the years 28–30 A.D.<sup>27</sup> They have perpetuated the story of Jesus sub-

<sup>26</sup> Written within the period, 65–110 A.D.

<sup>27</sup> Approximately these years, for the exact dates and duration of the public ministry of Jesus are still uncertain. The year 29 A.D. for the crucifixion of Jesus, which found some favor a decade ago (so e.g., O. Holtzmann, in his *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, 1. Aufl.; Turner in his article "Chronology of the New Testament" in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*; Sanday in his article "Jesus Christ" in the same work), has not established itself, and Holtzmann in the second edition of his work returned to the commonly accepted year 30 A.D. for the event.

stantially in accordance with the original facts; not out of a chronicling intent or disposition on the part of the evangelists, but out of a simple confidence in, devotion to, and use of, the practically helpful material which Jesus had produced for religion and morality, and which his followers reproduced for the good of men in their own generations.

The Gospel of Matthew, more than the others, gives some indication of the ecclesiastical spirit, impulse, and achievement at the time when it arose—in the closing years of the first or the opening years of the second century. The book has an ecclesiastical interest and purpose, but of a minor sort. This feature of the book is not abundant or prominent, the two more striking and detailed passages being 16:17-19; 18:15-20.<sup>28</sup> They deal with the organized unity of the church under a single official, authoritative head, and the discipline of church members. They do not touch upon the kind or number of local church officers, the conditions of membership, or the interrelation of the single churches and the provincial groups of churches. The Gospel of Matthew also presents and promulgates for the world-wide mission of Christianity the rite of baptism, and the trinitarian formula to be used in connection therewith;<sup>29</sup> but it does not specifically show how this rite was understood and practiced within the local churches. The Sermon on the Mount<sup>30</sup> sets forth with deliber-

<sup>28</sup> The former passage reads: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The latter passage: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the gentile and the publican. Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

<sup>29</sup> Matt. 28:19.

<sup>30</sup> Matt., chaps. 5-7.

ate system and fulness the teachings of Jesus which furnished the working ideal and principles of the Christian life, in a kind of charter or textbook on conduct for the church, viewed in some sense as the "New Law" that fulfils and supersedes the Old Law; but it is remarkable how little has been modified or added by way of interpretation or adaptation,<sup>31</sup> and how inconspicuous and indefinite the ecclesiastical intent is. The Mission Teaching,<sup>32</sup> gathered into a single discourse from various parts of Jesus' ministry, is grouped and presented in a way to be practically useful in the evangelizing activities of the church. The Forgiveness Teaching<sup>33</sup> is adduced in a way to promote this essential quality and act of love in the Christian communities which the Gospel of Matthew would reach. And the arraignment of the sins of the scribes and Pharisees, elaborately and vehemently worked out,<sup>34</sup> was by no means retrospective in primary intent, but for the condemnation and removal of similar sins among the Christians of the author's own day.<sup>35</sup>

But how can one wonder that the gospel memorabilia were turned to account for everyday practical use? The pragmatic impulse and purpose are always dominant in the ways of men. And it is doubtful whether the Christians would have had sufficient historical interest to preserve the story of Jesus, if they had not found it homiletically valuable, morally and religiously enlightening and impelling. The remarkable thing is that these later Christians did not more completely eliminate the (to them) useless, and more completely transmute the original sayings into accord with current thought, expression, and atmosphere.

The Matthew passage concerning Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom is the most distinct and striking—very likely also the most recent and most advanced—feature in the ecclesiasticism of this gospel. One might not have supposed that the primacy of Peter over the whole church would have come to clear conception and expression at so

<sup>31</sup> Probably 5:18, 19 is an instance, and 7:21-23; possibly 6:34 and 7:6. Pfeiderer (*Primitive Christianity*, II, 319 f., 326) holds that the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer as they appear in Matthew have been reworked and reinterpreted for church use, besides various other sayings in chaps. 5-7.

<sup>32</sup> Matt., chap. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 18:21-35.

<sup>34</sup> Matt., chap. 23.

<sup>35</sup> For a more vigorous and thoroughgoing statement of this general view see Pfeiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, II, 379-82.

early a date as that at which the Gospel of Matthew was written—in the decade or two before or after 100 A.D.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the lack of supporting evidence ought to convince us that this passage (16:17–19) did not belong to the Gospel of Matthew as originally written, but was added at this point in a later period. Yet it is quite possible, so considerable were the changes within two generations after the death of Paul and Peter, that the idea of making Peter the supreme head of the whole church may have arisen thus early. It is to be observed that our Matthew passage knows nothing of the later assumption that Peter was founder and head of the church at Rome, from which position of prominence and power he was advanced to the primacy of the entire church. The Peter tradition of the Roman Catholic church appears here in a simple primitive form.

The idea of Peter elsewhere in the New Testament does not correspond with that contained in Matt. 16:17–19.<sup>37</sup> Nowhere else is it said that Peter required or received a special divine revelation to inform or convince him of the Messiahship of Jesus. Nowhere else is Peter accorded a supernatural call, after the manner of Jesus himself<sup>38</sup> and of Paul,<sup>39</sup> to a unique position and work.<sup>40</sup> Nowhere else is Peter made the foundation of the church; on the contrary,

<sup>36</sup> Compare Pfeiderer (*op. cit.*, II, 352): "Of the position of commanding authority such as is ascribed to Peter in this passage of Matthew there is no trace in early Christian literature up to the middle of the second century; but in the Clementine Homilies, which date from that period, Peter is exalted in just this fashion. Therefore, in Matt 16:18f., what we are to recognize is precisely the *first expression of the specifically Catholic self-consciousness of the church*, which toward the middle of the second century began to consolidate itself under the watchwords 'Peter' or—what comes practically to the same thing—the 'New Law.'"

<sup>37</sup> The three verses belong together. Vs. 17 indicates that Peter had received a special revelation—one that had come to him alone—which qualified him for the supreme office of head of Christ's church on earth (vss. 18, 19).

<sup>38</sup> Mark 1:10 f.

<sup>39</sup> Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–16; 26:12–18; Gal. 1:15 f.

<sup>40</sup> But in Acts 10:1–11:18 is a conspicuous account of how Peter was given a special divine revelation that gentiles were not to be debarred from entrance into Christianity by reason of their disregard of the Jewish ritual law. This supplies Peter with precedence of Paul in the discovery, application, and defense of the gentile principle, which the Pauline Epistles seem to indicate as Paul's original and peculiar contribution to the mission problems of primitive Christianity. It may be that this special Acts narrative shows one of the legendary steps by which the exaltation of Peter to the unique honor of Matt. 16:17–19 was achieved.

in various passages Christ is named as the foundation or cornerstone.<sup>41</sup> Nowhere else is Peter made the steward of the church on earth, with exclusive authority to permit and forbid.<sup>42</sup> Outside of this peculiar Matthew passage Peter appears in the New Testament as doing the work of an apostle without special commission, office, or authority, a natural and efficient leader among the Christians on a common plane with James, John, Paul, and the others.

There is no parallel for Matt. 16:17-19 in the other gospels. Yet both Mark and Luke have the full context, preceding and following these verses, and the relationship between the three parallel accounts is close. Probably the author of the First Gospel derived from the Second Gospel this narrative, and inserted at the logical point therein this special feature. The three verses constitute one of Matthew's conspicuous additions to the material of the "triple tradition." The omission of these significant verses from two of the three gospel accounts of Jesus' vital conversation with his disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi could not well be explained if they were originally from Jesus in that connection.

Moreover, they are out of accord with Jesus' thought. Whether he positively and certainly anticipated a speedy establishment of the Kingdom of God or held an indefinite view of the future, he did not provide for any formal organization of his followers into a church, or set up one of them as an official supreme over the others. The term "church" (*ἐκκλησία*) appears in the gospels only here and in the corresponding verse;<sup>43</sup> it can scarcely be understood in any

<sup>41</sup> So Paul, in I Cor. 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (Matt. 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:6, 7). In Eph. 2:20 "the apostles and prophets" are said to be the foundation (cf. I Cor. 12:28—evidently it is the *Christian* prophets, not the Old Testament prophets, that are meant), "Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone." Even in so late an epistle as Ephesians (possibly post-Pauline), Peter is not yet singled out from the other apostles to be made alone the foundation. The Gospel of Matthew cannot well be interpreted at 16:17-19 to mean that the special honor and function assigned to Peter was understood to be equally assigned to the other eleven apostles, Peter being only regarded and dealt with as a representative of the entire group.

<sup>42</sup> The kindred passage in Matt. 18:18 assigns the power of "binding and loosing" to an indefinite number of Christians, perhaps to all members of the church collectively. At John 20:23, in a post-resurrection narrative, the forgiveness or retention of sins is assigned to the group of apostles.

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 16:18; 18:17.



other than the formal collective sense, connoting the formal organization of Christian believers.<sup>44</sup>

The situation with which our Matthew verses are connected is the familiar one in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus had withdrawn from Galilee; the disappointed multitudes no longer heard him gladly because he would not fulfil or even encourage their mistaken Messianic expectations. Jesus was uncertain whether the popular defection would not also sweep away even his closest disciples.<sup>45</sup> It was with solicitude that he inquired of the Twelve, when he now had them by themselves far away from the Galilean multitude, what their idea of him was—whether they, in contrast with the people generally, still regarded him as the Messiah. Peter's prompt and sure reply, "Thou art the Messiah," was the answer that Jesus earnestly desired to hear. Peter had proved his faith, spiritual insight, moral judgment, personal loyalty, and practical efficiency as a disciple by this firm, clear stand on the main question of supporting Jesus and his ministry. His confession and attitude were no less satisfying if they were anticipated by Jesus, who had carefully instructed and trained the Twelve and knew Peter well.

At this point some expression from Jesus of his approval and appreciation of Peter's steadfastness would not have been amiss, although the Mark and Luke accounts give no indication that such words were spoken. If there were words of Jesus to this effect, they may have formed the basis upon which Matt. 16:17-19 historically rested. Or, the rising Peter tradition may have considered this passage an ideal point of attachment (as indeed it was) for its special doctrine. The persistent effort of commentators to give these additional verses in the Matthew account a minimum interpretation, in order that they may be regarded as original with Jesus, cannot be pronounced successful; such interpretation requires the washing-out of the salient features of the passage.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> As Paul uses it, Gal. 1:13; I Cor. 10:32; 12:28. Also the Acts, 2:47; 8:3; 20:28. Compare Eph. 1:22; 3:10; 5:23-32; I Tim. 3:5.

<sup>45</sup> The Gospel of John, 6:66-69, pictures this situation more explicitly (perhaps less exactly?) than the Synoptics: "Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

<sup>46</sup> This seems particularly the case with the interpretation by O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu*, S. 265 f. (Eng. trans., 328-30), who accepts Matt. 16:17-19 as coming

The purport of Matt. 16:17-19 may, then, be stated as follows: Jesus pronounces a divine blessing upon Peter because he is the first of all his followers to affirm positively and heartily his continued belief in Jesus' messiahship, at a time when the scribes and Pharisees were denying it and the common people were in perplexing, disheartening doubt. Jesus further says that Peter had received this truth by special revelation from God himself. Thereby Peter is qualified, called, and appointed to be the foundation of Christ's church—the formal organization of his followers on earth, for the perpetuation and spread of his mission. Peter is assigned this supreme function because he is one whose belief and loyalty should be counted typical. This church on earth will triumph, however unpromising its future might now seem. With a shifting of the building figure, Peter is then made to be the steward of this church on earth; in this connection "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" can only mean the supervision of the affairs of the kingdom of heaven in the present earthly stage of its progress, otherwise the phrase would involve the ascription to Peter of eschatological functions—an idea the passage does not intend.<sup>47</sup> In the exercise of this stewardship Peter's decisions, it is affirmed, will be ratified by God—what he permits and what he forbids will be permitted and forbidden by divine decree; which probably means that Peter is to be the administrator of the government and discipline—perhaps also of the personnel and teaching—of the church.

This passage in Matthew,<sup>48</sup> so understood, is probably to be regarded, not as an utterance of Jesus, but as an expression of the

from Jesus. To the contrary, Allen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 179: "It is difficult not to be drawn to the conclusion that the whole of the passage, vss. 17-19 . . . is the work of the evangelist. The motive must have been to emphasize the prominence of S. Peter in the Christian body as foretold and sanctioned by Jesus himself."

<sup>47</sup> The forgiving and retaining of sins, which would be an eschatological prerogative, is probably not to be understood as belonging to the thought of this passage, although in Matt. 18:18 the association of the "binding and loosing" prerogative with forgiveness teaching seems to imply that meaning for the parallel saying there.

<sup>48</sup> Recent important discussions of the interpretation of Matt. 16:17-19 may be read in Harnack, *Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts in den zwei ersten Jahrhunderten* (1910), S. 1-7; Allen, *Commentary on Matthew* (1907), 175-80; Plummer, *Commentary on Matthew* (1909), 226-31; Loisy, *Les évangiles synoptiques* (1908), II, 5-15; Guiguebert, *La primauté de Pierre*

developing ecclesiastical impulse and purpose of the Christian church at about 100 A.D., and marks one of the earliest stages in the growth of that particular type of church organization which we know as Roman Catholicism.

*et la venue de Pierre à Rome* (1909); J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (2te Aufl., 1906), S. 319-21; Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Matthaei* (1904), S. 84, 85; Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (1903), S. 536-48; Schmiedel, art. "Simon Peter" in *Encyclopedia Biblica* (1903); H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker* (3te Aufl., 1901), S. 257-59; Chase, art. "Peter" in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* (1901), III, 759 f.; B. Weiss, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium* (Meyer Kommentar, 7te Aufl., 1898), S. 295-300; Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (1898), 8-21; Pfeiderer, *Das Urchristentum* (2te Aufl., 1904), I, 582-85, 604-5 (Eng. trans., *Primitive Christianity*, II, 349-52, 379-82); Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu* (2te Aufl., 1900), S. 153, 398, 585-90 (Eng. trans., II, 351-57); Resch, *Aussercanonische Paralltexte zu den Evangelien* (1894), II, 187-96; Lightfoot, *Clement* (1869), II, 481-90.